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UZ, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH GAERC RESPONSE

REF: STATE 43742

Classified By: A/POL William Jordan for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary. On April 21, MFA Political Director Gerard Araud presented French views on the top-priority concerns of Iran and the Balkans, while on April 25, MFA Office Director for CFSP Patrick Maisonnave provided the general French reaction to the April GAERC demarche. Araud said that EU consensus on further EU sanctions against Iran will be difficult to obtain largely due to Austrian obstruction, and that Iran has little incentive to change its policies in the coming year. On the Balkans, Araud focused on the EU's efforts to reach out to Serbia, and the need for pragmatism in the deployment of EULEX. Maisonnave noted generally that this GAERC will not produce groundbreaking results, and specifically that the lack of consensus on EU-Russia cooperation will create a missed opportunity. Subject-matter bureaus of the MFA provided additional input that supplements here the input from Araud and Maisonnave. End Summary.

NEXT STEPS ON IRAN

¶2. (S/NF) In an April 21 meeting with the Ambassador, MFA Political Director Gerard Araud stated that there are three distinct "stages" of EU action needed in Brussels: 1) designation of an EU list of entities and individuals believed to be in violation of existing resolutions (including Bank Melli); 2) implementation of UNSCR 1803 in EU policy and regulations; and 3) adopting unilateral EU financial and economic measures. According to Araud, Italy lifted its hold following the recent Quint meeting and the list of entities and individuals from the previous resolution should be approved at the GAERC barring a change in policy following the recent Italian elections. On UNSCR 1803, France and the UK have been advocating a policy of "tough implementation" using the text as a basis for stronger actions. This approach is opposed by Italy, Spain and Austria which want implementation limited to the literal meaning of the exact words of the resolution. Araud stated that he did not believe that the EU would reach consensus on developing unilateral EU sanctions, largely due to Austrian obstruction. Austria has a large economic interest in Iran and feels excluded from the Quint discussions where policy decisions are made; it is not prepared to "pay for" the policies that others make.

¶3. (S/NF) Araud further expressed his own opinion that there would be little forward movement by Iran this year. He believes that the Iranian government is prepared to "wait out" the U.S. elections and change of administration. Since the publication of the last NIE (which Araud termed "a major mistake"), Iran no longer fears that a U.S. strike is imminent and many Iranian officials believe they could get a better deal by

negotiating with a new administration. Araud, expressing a personal view, also doubted that the Israelis, whose actions are always impossible to predict with certainty, would take unilateral action despite their belief Iran was further along in developing a detonator for a nuclear device.

Furthermore, with oil at record highs of more than \$115/barrel, the economic impact of sanctions is limited. (Comment: As others at the MFA have done, Araud also complained that trade flows from Dubai were undermining all efforts to exert meaningful pressure on Iran. End comment.) Araud speculated that if the U.S., Israel and others were prepared to share intelligence more broadly, a formal briefing in Vienna, such as the one Heinonen gave prior to the vote on UNSCR 1803, may help solidify European support, but even then, he believes it "would be an uphill battle." Araud asserted that U.S. pressure on the EU to pass stronger sanctions will have less and less effect largely because the Bush administration is in its final months, and also because some EU members remain uncomfortable with the idea of a union designed to promote economic integration adopting such blatantly political positions.

14. (C) As for the April GAERC meeting, MFA Office Director for CFSP Patrick Maisonnave advised PolOffs on April 25 that Iran will not be a focus of discussion, and he alluded to the EU's internal divisions over how best to incorporate UNSCR 1803 into commonly applied regulations.

KOSOVO: SERBIA IS NOW THE PRIORITY

15. (C) Araud regretted what he views as a difference in
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emphasis between U.S. and French policy in the Balkans. For the GOF, the priority now is to "get back Serbia." Specifically, the French do not want to do anything that could jeopardize results in the Serbian elections on May 11, including actions designed to ensure the "territorial sovereignty" of Kosovo in name only. The GOF views territorial sovereignty in the northern part of Kosovo as a "credible fiction;" Kosovo Serbs will not accept Kosovo's Independence, and it is important to avoid overt confrontation or an escalation of violence. Complicating the picture is the position of the UN, which is weakened by the fact that less than 40 countries have thus far recognized Kosovo and Russia is using this to pressure UNSYG Ban Ki Moon. Therefore, the best option is to keep exchanges on the subject low-key and adapt to the realities on the ground. For example, in practice it may be best for the EU presence to be strongest in the south while the UN should remain more visible in the North of Kosovo.

16. (C) Araud informed us that France is looking at several ways to help the pro-European, pro-democracy supporters in Serbia. First, the GOF would like to be able to offer Serbs visa-free travel to the EU before the May elections, as a strong signal that they are welcome and accepted in Europe. France is also working very hard within the EU to get the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) signed. Araud was not sure whether the GOF would succeed in overcoming Dutch resistance to offering the Serbs an SAA before they have turned over the Srebrenica war criminals. Finally, both France and the EU are willing to support the Serbian government financially. France is considering its response to a Serbian request for USD 400 million in assistance while the EU, which can "give money without the public noticing," is working on a 200-million euro assistance package.

17. (C) Maisonnave advised us April 25 that France welcomed the U.S. demarches encouraging recognition of Kosovo, and said that France has focused its efforts on the 9 EU members that have not yet done so. For this month's GAERC, he stated

that the Netherlands may have more flexibility regarding the SAA following this week's parliamentary debates, and that there could be progress at the meeting. He added, regarding the transition from UNMIK to EULEX, that deployment must take account of the changes in context, but that with pragmatism, the transition can still be smooth, just slower. Maisonnave also advised us that the EU is working hard on the proposal to grant free EU visas for Serbians but acknowledged that the initiative will likely have little impact on the May 11 Serbian elections.

EU-RUSSIA: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

18. (C) Maisonnave said that this GAERC will not produce very significant results, in part because an opportunity is being missed to make progress on EU-Russia relations with a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. He said that the EU must try to renew its relations with Russia due to the high stakes, new Russian leadership, and increased understanding in the last few months of the dynamics between Russian internal politics and foreign policy. However, Lithuania is blocking progress on the new Agreement due to bilateral issues.

UZBEKISTAN: VISA BAN EXTENDED

19. (C) Maisonnave advised us that Uzbekistan will be a subject of the GAERC, with EU member-states extending the visa ban for six more months.

BOSNIA: FRANCE WELCOMES POLICE REFORM, ENCOURAGES SAA

110. (U) GOF authorities publicly welcomed the final adoption of two police reform bills in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) on April 18. The MFA spokesman noted that police reform was one of the conditions for the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) between the EU and BiH, adding that now that this stage has been crossed, the GOF hopes the agreement can be signed. France also expressed its support for EU Special Representative in BiH, Miroslav Lajcak.

GEORGIA: CONCERN OVER MOSCOW'S COOPERATION WITH SEPARATISTS

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111. (U) France is concerned about the Kremlin's announcement that Russia intends to reinforce its cooperation with Georgian separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, according to the MFA spokesman on April 17. The MFA said it is waiting for clarification from the Kremlin and called on all parties to avoid any violent escalation. The spokesman recalled UNSCR 1808 noting the UNSC's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia according to its internationally recognized borders. The GOF also noted that it supports, without any reservations, the efforts of the OSCE and the UN/SYG's Friends of Georgia to assist in a lasting solution to the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

IRAQ, ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

112. (C) Maisonnave said that this GAERC will not issue any conclusions on Iraq, as EU policy has not recently changed. He described that policy as being "still in the declaratory phase" and said that the EU does not have a

lever in the Iraq situation. When asked about possible EU efforts to ameliorate the humanitarian situation of Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries, he noted that France and the EU appreciated the magnitude of the problem but had no plans to increase assistance (Maisonnavé emphasized that such a discussion was not planned at the GAERC in any event).

FM Kouchner and other EU participants in the recent "neighbors" meeting in Kuwait will report to the Council on what transpired from that event.

¶13. (C) Maisonnavé predicted that the GAERC debate on Israeli-Palestinian Peace will be very quick, as there are no new subjects and thus no recent changes in position.

ZIMBABWE: FRENCH INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF GOZ

¶14. (SBU) French policy towards Zimbabwe has been very similar to that of the USG and has become increasingly critical because of the GOZ's failure to resolve the current crisis and its continued refusal to release the results of the March 29 elections. FM Kouchner joined his counterparts from Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, Slovakia, and Slovenia on March 31 in congratulating Zimbabwe on holding its elections in a generally peaceful manner. However, the GOF also asked that election results be posted promptly. The French on April 4 criticized the GOZ's arrest of journalists and harassment of the MDC party. The MFA on April 7 repeated its call for the release of election results. On April 15, the MFA expressed France's strong concern and deplored the fact that election results still had not been announced. The MFA supported the April 12 SADC Summit call for the results to be published, stating that "we have two concerns -- the respect for the result of the vote and the stability of the region. The Zimbabwean authorities owe the truth to their people."

¶15. (C) Maisonnavé noted that for the April GAERC, the EU position will echo prior statements in calling for publication of election results, non-violence, and supporting the mediation of the SADC and AU (barring better alternatives, Maisonnavé acknowledged). He said that the GOF was pleased by the recall of the arms-carrying ship as announced by a Chinese official today. Maisonnavé said that EU member-states differ in their sensitivities when dealing with the Zimbabwe situation, but that any disagreement is about tactics, given the limited options. He indicated little confidence in SADC's ability to act in a united or effective fashion on Zimbabwe, meaning that South African President Mbeki was the sole African leader who might have a decisive impact on any outcome.

BURMA, PAKISTAN, CHINA/TIBET

¶16. (SBU) BURMA: Maisonnavé said that the April GAERC meeting will produce a "marker" on Burma, indicating that future action will depend on developments such as the outcome of Gambari's efforts. He noted that some EU member-states, including France, fear going too far, too fast on sanctions. France supports new measures that would affect the regime, but is unsure how effective any new measures would be. France continues to look for ways to "touch the regime's accounts." The French agree that the Burmese regime remains closed to the demands of its people for a genuine dialogue, and have not demonstrated willingness to hold a transparent referendum

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on May 10.

¶17. (SBU) PAKISTAN: In recent statements and conversations with Embassy officials, France has commended the Pakistani

government and President Musharraf for successful elections. France sees Pakistan as a key regional ally in the fight against terrorism and will continue to work with the Pakistani government to improve regional security. Most French aid to Pakistan is through EU donations, but France will continue to work with the EU to assist Pakistani development.

¶18. (SBU) CHINA/TIBET: Similarly, the GOF has in recent days continued to urge China to engage in a dialogue with the Dalai Lama before the start of the Olympic games. France will discuss attendance at the Olympic games with EU partners, particularly in light of its upcoming EU Presidency, and has set no conditions for French attendance at the games or opening ceremonies.

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